(c) The main reasons for the shortfall are as under:

(i) Indian shipping tonnage has not increased at a matching rate with the increase in sea-borne trade.

(ii) Indian shipping companies have been given freedom to trade their vessels as per their commercial judgement in cross trade without any obligation to carry Indian cargo.

(iii) Inadequate fiscal and financial incentives.

(d) Government had constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Director General of Shipping to recommend to the Government, National Shipping Policy. This Committee has since submitted its Report on 31.07.97.

Delay in completion of Paradeep Port update project

1671. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the completion of Paradeep Port update project for expansion of mechanical coal handling facilities is anticipated to be delayed considerably;

(b) if so, by when the project is likely to be completed according to the revised schedule as against the original target of its completion;

(c) what are the reasons therefor;

(d) the extent to which the cost of the project is likely to escalate as a result thereof; and

(e) what steps have been taken by Government to ensure the completion of the project according to the revised schedule to avoid further cost escalation?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) Mechanical Coal Handling Project at Paradip Port is likely to be completed by December, 1999 as against the original target of 28th September, 1998.

(c) The reasons for delay are:

(i) Delay in obtaining Railway Approval for Train Unloading System and Rail Layout.

(ii) Litigation in the case.

(iii) Delay due to rebidding of a package because of withdrawal of bid validity by the successful bidder during extended bid validity period.

(d) The revised cost of the project is being worked out by the Port.

(e) The Government has constituted a High Level Steering Committee to monitor the progress of the project. The monitoring of projects at Port and Ministry level has also been strengthened.

Repair of National Highways in Tamil Nadu

1672. SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that most of the National Highways in Tamil Nadu are in bad condition which are damaging not only vehicles but also resulting excess consumption of petroleum products;

(b) the total amount sanctioned and released for repairing these highways during 1996-97 and 1997-98; and

(c) by when the repairing work is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Government of India keeps on monitoring the condition of National Highways and maintains the same in traffic worthy condition by alloting the funds annually to the State Government, within available resources, for regular repair/maintenance of damaged portion, if any, on National Highways.